

# THE QUAVER,

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## Musical Form.

*Continued from page 179.*

THE overture of an opera, which the Italians call the *sinfonia*, is considered by some persons as an important part of the music of the drama, and by others as of trifling consequence. The first which enjoyed any reputation in Italy, was the overture to the opera of *Frascatana*, by Paisiello. The overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide*, by Gluck, had a prodigious effect, when heard for the first time, in 1773, and has since continued to excite admiration, by the mixture of majesty, confusion, and pathos, with which it is filled. The overture of *Démophon*, by Vogel, is also very fine in its opening, and through the whole of the first part; but the end is unworthy of the beginning. Two other overtures have also had much reputation in France—those of the *Caravan* and of *Panurge*, both composed by Grétry. They contain phrases of happy melody, but are so ill constructed that they do not deserve their reputation. Without plan, distinct character, or harmony, their success was only to be ascribed to the unformed taste of the French public. Cherubini has composed several overtures of very remarkable merit, which have become classical in almost all the concerts of Europe, and are performed with equal success in England, Germany, and France. The most beautiful are those of the *Hôtellerie Portugaise* and of *Anacreon*; the plan, style, and instrumentation of which are equally admirable.

Among pieces of this kind, that which is considered to be the most beautiful, in whatever point of view it may be examined, is the overture to the *Magic Flute*—an inimitable masterpiece, which will for ever be the model of overtures, and the despair of composers. Every thing is united in this fine work—breadth and magnificence in the opening; novelty in the themes; variety in the mode of reproducing them; profound science in the plan and in the details; striking instrumentation; an interest constantly increasing, and a conclusion full of fire. We may also mention, as models of dramatic interest, the overtures of *Egmont* and of *Prometheus*, by Beethoven. Rossini, in his overtures of *Tancredi*, *Otello*, the *Barbier de Seville*, and of *Semiramide*, has multiplied the happiest melodies, and the most attractive effects of instrumentation; but he has shewn, also, that the finest genius is not always able to make the best use of the happiest ideas. Every piece of instrumental music is, in fact, commonly divided into two parts. The first

exhibits the ideas of the author, and modulates into the key relative to the principal key; the second part is devoted to working out less ideas, to a return into the primitive key, and to a repetition of certain passages of the first part. The development of ideas in the second part is the most difficult thing in the management of an overture; it requires preliminary studies in the science of counterpoint, and care in the combinations. Rossini cuts the Gordian knot. He does not make the second part, but confines himself to the introduction of a few chords, in order to return into the primitive key, and then repeats, almost exactly, the whole of the first part in another key. In the overture to *William Tell*, he has taken more pains, and has produced a work more worthy of his brilliant reputation.

It has been frequently said that an overture should be a summing up of the piece, and that it ought to have reference to some passages of the principal situations in it. Several musicians have adopted this idea, and, in consequence, have made a kind of *pot-pourri* of the overture of their opera. The notion seems to me to be strange. If a recapitulation of the opera be necessary, so be it; but it ought certainly to be at the end of the piece, when the hearer can perceive the merit of certain phrases, which recall to mind certain situations of the work. If, on the contrary, these phrases are heard by him before he has any knowledge of the situations, they do not recall anything to his mind, and do not attract more attention than any other phrases might do. Besides, it is well to recollect that no justly esteemed overture is written upon this plan. The overtures of *Iphigénie*, of *Démophon*, of *Don Juan*, of the *Magic Flute*, of *Egmont*, of *Prometheus*, of the *Hôtellerie Portugaise*, and of *Anacreon*, are really dramatic symphonies, and not *pot-pourris*.

Though the overture belongs to instrumental music, I have thought proper to speak of it in connexion with the musical drama. I return now to what concerns the form of vocal pieces.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a true music for the private concert, which consisted of a sort of vocal pieces, in four, five, or six parts, which were called *madrigals* or *songs*. The use of this kind of music has diminished since the opera has become sufficiently interesting to draw the attention of amateurs. The airs of the operas have insensibly taken the place of what was called the *music of the chamber*, and the latter has almost entirely disappeared. All of it, which has been preserved, are the *canzonette*, in Italy; the *lieder*, in Germany; and the *romances* for one or two voices in France. These different pieces participate of the national taste stamped on the other parts of the music of each of these nations: thus the taste of the



Italians for beautiful and embellished melodies may be observed in the *canzonette*; the *lieder*, or German songs, are distinguished by a remarkable frankness of style united with an instinctive feeling of profound harmony; while the French *romances* shine particularly by the dramatic or intellectual character of the words. The name of *nocturnes* is sometimes given to the romances for two voices.

These little pieces occasionally have a prodigious vogue, when first brought out, and their authors enjoy, for ten or twelve years, a brilliant drawing-room reputation, which they lose by the infatuation of the public for the next new comer. A musician, now become celebrated for a higher kind of composition, Boieldieu, wrote charming romances, which were very fashionable; after him came Garat, then Blangini, then Madame Gail, to whom Romagnesi succeeded; Beauplan enjoyed a moment's fame; and, more recently, Labarre, Panseron, and Masini, were all the rage.

Instrumental music is divided into several branches which are all included under two principal kinds—1, concert music; and 2, chamber music.

The *symphony* holds the first rank in concert music. It derives its origin from a certain kind of instrumental pieces, which were formerly called, in Italy, *ricercari da suonare*, and in Germany, *partien*, and which were composed of songs varied, airs for the dance, and of fugues or fugued pieces, designed to be performed by viols, bass viols, lutes, theorbes, etc. When these pieces went out of fashion, their place was supplied by pieces divided into two parts, of a movement somewhat lively, followed by another piece of a slower movement, and by a *rondeau*, which derived its name from the repetition of its principal phrase. The first symphonies were composed only of two parts for violins, one for the alto and one for the bass. A German musician, by the name of Vannah, began to improve the symphony, by adding two oboes and two horns. He was imitated by Toelsky, Van Malder, and Stamitz. Gossec added parts for clarionets and bassoons to the other instruments, and the addition of the *minuet* and *trio* increased the number of pieces which already existed in the symphony. The *minuet* derives its name from the measure, in triple time, in which it is written. It was formerly almost of as slow a movement as the dance of which it bears the name; but the time of it has been gradually quickened, and Beethoven has, as last, made it *presto*. It is for this reason that he has dropped the name of *minuet*, and substituted that of *scherzo* (*bandinage*). I have not been able to discover the meaning of the word *trio*, which is given to the second part of the minuet. It may be that it

comes from the composer's sometimes suppressing one of the instruments in this second part.

One can hardly pronounce the name of symphony without awakening the recollection of Haydn. This great musician so much improved the plan and the details of this kind of music, that he is, in some sort, the creator of it. The history of the progress of the genius and talent of that astonishing man, is in itself the history of the progress of the art. His first works proved his superiority over his contemporaries; but they were much inferior to those which subsequently issued from his pen. If we keep in mind the fact that these works were always adapted to the skill of the performers, by whom they were executed—a skill which Haydn himself excited and in part created,—we shall be able to conceive, without difficulty, what profound talent was necessary to produce those masterpieces, with the limited means at his command. If the knowledge of the performers of Haydn's time had been equal to what now exists, he would have left nothing for his successors to do. The principal talent of Haydn consisted in making the most of the simplest idea, working it out in a manner the most learned, the richest in harmony, and the most unexpected in its effects, without ever ceasing to be graceful. He is distinguished also by the directness and clearness of his plan, which is such that the least educated amateur can follow out its details with as little difficulty as the most skilful musician. Mozart, who is always impassioned, and always excited by deep feeling, shines less than Haydn in the development of the subject of his symphonies; but with the exquisite sensibility with which he was so abundantly endowed, there is a power of emotion which always carries away the audience, and excites their sympathy.

Beethoven, whose talent was for a long time misunderstood in France, now reigns supreme in the symphony. Bolder than the two great artists whom I have just mentioned, he never feared encountering the greatest difficulties, and frequently achieved a happy triumph. His genius carried him to the highest region, and no one had a better knowledge of the effect of instrumentation, in which he has made many discoveries; but he is frequently fantastic and peculiar, sometimes incorrect, and seems rather to extemporize than to follow any settled plan. In fine, he shares the fortune of all men of genius, by occupying the attention, rather with the beauties of which he is prodigal, than with the faults which disfigure them.

Quartets, quintets, sextets, etc., are mere diminutives of the symphony, and designed to take its place in private concerts. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, were also the masters of this kind of miniature symphony, in which they frequently

displayed such talent, that we forgot the limited extent of the means which they employ. The same qualities which they have infused into their grand symphonies, are found in their quartets.

Booccherini, a man who lived poor, isolated, and unknown, in Spain, has also cultivated this kind of music, and particularly the quintet, with a rare felicity of inspiration. Not having sufficient communication with the world to be informed of the progress of music and the variations of taste, he composed during a period of nearly fifty years, without renewing his musical sensations by hearing or reading the works of Haydn and Mozart; he drew every thing from his own mind, and hence the independence of manner and style, the originality of ideas, and the charming simplicity, which characterise his productions. We may, perhaps, wish for more learning, more richness of harmony, and something less of antiquity, in the forms of the music of Booccherini, but not for more true inspiration.

*(To be continued.)*

## A Neglected Musical Benefactor.

BY WILLIAM H. CUMMINGS, ESQ.

*(Concluded from page 181.)*

**I** HAVE seen a song of which the accompaniment was so elaborate that three staves were needed to permit its being written out properly. Duet accompaniments to the piano-forte (to vocal pieces) were written by Attwood, Spohr, and others. I might dilate to a considerable length on this matter of written accompaniment, but I think I have said enough to induce you to believe with me that the inventor of a properly written part for the harpsichord or piano-forte was indeed "A musical benefactor," and, as his claims have not hitherto been generally recognised, I think I may justly call him "a neglected musical benefactor."

At the Caxton Exhibition of 1877, I called attention to the inventor of the written harpsichord accompaniment, by exhibiting the publication in which he announced his invention: and I further invited a recognition of his work by inserting a special note in the catalogue. Since that time the publication of the capital "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," edited by Mr. Grove, has commenced, and although not yet complete, it has so far progressed as to have passed in review the life and labours of my hero, Domenico Corri, who was born in 1746, and died in London some-

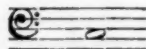
where about 1825. He came to England in 1771, but soon went to Edinburgh, where he pursued his profession as vocalist and singing-master, and published the work of which I shall speak presently. He was a prolific composer of music, and published largely, but his so-called operas, like his educational works, are now almost forgotten.

The book which entitles him to our lasting gratitude is the "Select Collection of the most admired Songs, Duets, etc." There are four volumes of this work, of which I have brought the first, as that will suffice to show the nature of Corri's innovation or improvement. I will read you the title of Corri's book, and also some extracts from his preface:—

A "Select Collection of the most admired songs, etc., from Operas in the highest esteem, and from other works in Italian, English, French, Scotch, Irish, etc., in three books: the first consisting of Italian Songs, Rondeaux, Duets, etc.; the second of English Songs, Duets, Terzetta, etc.; the third of Airs, Rondos, Canzonette, Duettini, Terzetti, Catches, Glees, etc., in all their respective languages. The music in this work is divided into phrases—as, in reading, sentences are marked by points—and to each are appropriated its Graces, Cadences, etc., with accurate directions for the management of the voice in the execution of them. A proper accompaniment is also arranged on a plan so distinct as to enable any harpsichord player to accompany himself with ease, although unacquainted with the rules of Thorough Bass. By Dominico Corri. Edinburgh, printed for John Corri; sold by him and C. Eliot, Parliament Square, and C. Robinson, Paternoster Row, London."

"Instrumental accompaniment, with respect to song, may be defined the addition to such parts as are not only just according to the laws of harmony, but also selected and disposed in such a manner as may best serve to support and give effect to the vocal part or parts. There are then three things to be considered; first, the parts themselves; secondly, the choice: and thirdly, the disposition of those parts. The parts themselves are ascertained by the fixed rules of harmony, the choice and disposition belong to taste alone. Agreeably to this definition of accompaniment, Mr. Rousseau, in his musical dictionary, has so fully shown the impossibility of accompanying properly by any method yet in use, that the author thinks it unnecessary to say anything on that head, as he would be obliged to repeat what any of his readers may see on turning to that work, at the article *Accompaniment*. The method of accompanying by the score, by figuring the bass, by the rule of the octave, and by Mr.

Rameau's, are there explained with great accuracy, and the disadvantages attending each of them pointed out with respect to the execution. In addition to what Mr. Rousseau says, the author begs leave to observe that in accompanying, either by the score, by the help of figures, or of certain other signs proposed by Mr. Rameau, the performer still plays by the eye merely; and that his execution is simply an effect of quick sight and practice, and altogether unconnected with the fundamental laws of harmony. The being able, from habit, to read several lines of music at once, to calculate instantaneously the different intervals on an instrument, and to know by certain established rules which note is to ascend, descend, or remain the same, is a very different thing from knowing why this is to be done. This is the science by which those figures or other signs are placed, and with which the mere execution of those signs has no more connection than the reading of a book has with its composition. If then it be granted, as it ought to be, that accompanying by the score, by figures, or by any other signs, is limited to the simple execution of what is noted, figured, or signed, it surely follows that the simpler and more explicit those signs are, the better calculated they must be to answer their end. Now that these and many other advantages particularly belong to the method proposed by the author will be evident on the slightest consideration. For instance, let the mode which is most practised, that of figuring the bass, be compared with that which is now offered to the public. A performer who accompanies by figures, on seeing a note marked thus:—



knows that to this note he must give the accompaniment of the third, fifth, and octave; but this is the extent of his knowledge. It remains to him then to calculate such intervals; and after having found them, to set them down thus:—



If then this operation of reading the figures and calculating the numbers answers no other purpose than merely that of finding out the notes as written in the second example, is it not evident that having those notes written down will answer every end purposed by the other method, whilst it will save all the trouble which attends it? Let

us suppose now, that by practice a performer has attained the greatest facility of calculating on the instrument the numbers expressed in the writing; yet, after all, unless he be thoroughly acquainted with the fundamental rules of *contrapunto*, he will scarcely be able to play two or three successive chords without committing some blunder, which the knowledge of the figures alone can neither warn him of nor enable him to avoid.

"Thus it has been shown that the method of accompanying by figures is not only attended with the continual trouble of calculation, but is even insufficient to answer the end for which these figures are employed; and, on the other hand, that by the method here proposed every harpsichord-player will be enabled, at sight, and without a single lesson on the subject, to accompany any piece of music with taste and elegance, as easily as he can play the most simple harpsichord lesson or air. It is true, indeed, that the rule of the octave, if thoroughly understood, will enable a performer to accompany without making any mistake in point of abstract harmony; but as to the choice and the proper position of these figures, and as to the other refinements necessary to accompany with delicacy and expression, the rule of the octave, though ever so well understood, does not in the smallest degree lead to the knowledge of them. This is so true that a performer accompanying according to the laws of thorough bass, without committing even a single mistake, may produce such an accompaniment as will totally destroy the effect of the music; and, indeed, it almost always happens in the execution of the harpsichord-accompaniment, that the delicate arrangement of parts, which cost the composer the greatest pains, is totally subverted and spoiled by the thorough bass player, who, instead of attending to this arrangement, endeavours to show his knowledge of his own science by cramming in as many full chords as possible, to the entire confusion of the melody and expression of the composition. The reason of this will be obvious if the reader considers what has already been said in the definition given of accompaniment; from which it is evident that to accompany properly it is necessary to possess both a profound knowledge of the science of harmony, and a refined taste in the choice and disposition of its parts. Now it is well understood that these things are perfectly distinct and unconnected; inasmuch, that a person may be a complete master of the science of *contrapunto* without having any taste at all. The laws of harmony are deduced from the physical principles of sound alone: they are a subject of calculation; and as such, may with propriety become the abstract science of a deaf man as well as of one who has the nicest ear. On the contrary, the art of arranging the



parts of harmony depends on a strong and exquisite feeling of their defects; and it is, of consequence, the production of sensibility alone. It is the united operation of that science and of this feeling which produces a fine accompaniment; and every composer knows how much labour this part of his work costs him. How then can it be supposed that a performer, though a master, can dispose an accompaniment as judiciously at first sight as the best composer is able to do in his closet after deliberate study and reiterated experiment? The absurdity of such a supposition is glaring. If then the impossibility of accompanying tolerably by any of the methods hitherto invented be obvious; and if another be found, at once easier to the performer, and more perfective of the harmony; it is to be wished that the public would enforce their approbation of it, by obliging the editors of music, instead of writing figures to the bass, to give a single line, as done in the present work, in which the proper accompaniment is expressed by notes."

"To conclude. In pointing out the errors and defects in the present mode of noting music, and stating the improvements which the author offers to the public, he is not conscious of misrepresentations: he assures his readers that he has been guided only by a love of truth, and an ardent desire of improving the science he professes. But if, notwithstanding, some persons should make objections to his work, he entreats they will not attempt to depreciate it in private companies, where the subject may not be perfectly understood; but state their objections in a public manner, and address them to the author in Edinburgh; and if it shall appear that he has fallen into error, he will be ready to acknowledge and retract it."

This is a very clear statement of the author's suggestion as to accompaniments; yet Fétis never mentions this part of Corri's labours. Although he gives an extended biography of him, it is clear he never saw the book. The notice of Corri in Grove's Dictionary is but scant, and wholly incorrect, and moreover it omits all mention of his invention. Other musical biographical works appear to be equally ignorant of Corri's special achievement.

I now invite you to look at Corri's beautifully engraved book, and at the special accompaniments; I ask you also to notice the frontispiece, pictorially depicting the "old system" and "*Corri's new system*." And I trust that in future when, either as composer or executant, you are revelling in the delight of creating or of interpreting some charming accompaniment, you will not fail to think of him whom I have ventured to call "a neglected musical benefactor."

In speaking of Corri as the inventor of a written accompaniment, of course I refer only to England. I do not know what is the first instance of its use on the Continent. As I have before said, Haydn's earliest printed songs were published with a thorough bass only, and, indeed, the first pianoforte accompaniment to Haydn's "Creation" was the work of Muzio Clementi.

It is interesting also to note that Corri was the publisher of Haydn's well-known canzonets, which had a pianoforte accompaniment. The title-pages of all the copies of these canzonets issued in the first edition were signed by Haydn, and had his address, 1, Bury Street, St. James's, and also Corri's address, Bridge Street, Edinburgh, with a notification that copies might be had at both places.

It should also be remembered that Mozart, when eight years of age, had published and sold at his lodgings, Thrift Street, Soho, a set of sonatas for the "clavecin" and violin and flute, in which the clavecin part was printed under the violin part. The clavecin part, although without figures to the bass, is so thin and meagre that we may be quite sure it is only a skeleton of what the juvenile composer himself played.—*Musical Standard*.

## Female Singers in Church Choirs.

**A**FTER an extensive movement in this country in favour of male surpliced choirs, we have arrived at signs of a re-action, perhaps chiefly brought about by the introduction of larger choral works into the Festival Services of the Church, and the consequent pressing need for more elastic voices, and for singers of more refined taste and mature judgment than are to be found in the ordinary choirs of men and boys. It is not to be asserted that the re-action is likely to prove a retrograde movement; no one in this matter is anxious to turn back, but it may, it is to be hoped, prove a movement of development, an advance, indeed, which will end in the fitting employment of all trained voices in the sanctuary. The choir of men and boys is not only something of an anomaly as involving the rejection of the most beautiful of created voices, but it is an institution which involves endless trouble in its training, with but usually poor results, as boys' voices are rarely tractable, and unfit to sustain much of the finest Church and sacred music; altos are scarce, and it has been adopted upon mistaken grounds. These are matters which the grand and rapid develop-

ment of Church music seems likely to correct in course of time. I am not about to advocate the abolition of surpliced choirs, far from that, but I desire to point out that the full and complete performance of the music of the sanctuary calls for the employment of all kinds of voices, of large choral bodies in fact, such as could not possibly be produced if we are to rely entirely upon boys' voices for the performance of the upper *stratum* of the vocal harmony. And I wish to show, while retaining the men's and boys' voices for the more purely ecclesiastical responses, etc., we need large, full choirs outside the chancel choirs, or better still, perhaps, to be so placed as to join with advantage the chancel choirs in singing noble Anthems and Service Music, and in leading the worship songs of our congregations. This universal employment of all our musical resources with, be it added, the discreet addition of orchestral accompaniments, would lead us back to the grand types of worship revealed to us as of the Jewish Church in the Old Testament, and lead us forward to such revelations of beauty and strength in our Church music as have hitherto not been realised in the Christian Church. With regard to the employment of female musicians in the ancient Jewish Church, it is needless to point to Miriam and other typical figures. But an esteemed musical friend, and sound thinker on art matters, directs my attention to the 25th Chapter of the First book of Chronicles, v. 5, 6, and 7, in which occur these words in connection with musical offices and singers of the Temple;—"God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries and harps for the service of the house of God. . . . So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, was two hundred four score and eight." From this passage alone, we gather indications of a large choral force, including female voices, accompanied by various instruments, and performing music which required artistic powers and special training. Here are no indications of the Puritanical doctrine that the only art to be developed in the sanctuary is the art of preaching. Here are no signs of ritualistic restrictions; but here we find evidence to justify the utilization of all good artistic gifts under proper guidance in worship music; and here we see the prototype of such grand Service music as the authorities of our cathedrals and great churches are gradually learning to give us. There is no New Testament prohibition as to the use of female voices in worship music, even though the Apostle judged they should be silent as regards speech, and so clearly indicates the seemly view we all accept that men must ever remain the chief officers of the Church. Indeed, it cannot be said that at any period of Church history the voices of women were not to be heard, or not encouraged to sing

either congregationally or in the choirs. The records of the earliest and purest days of the Christian Church reveal no foolish restrictions against the employment of women's voices; on the contrary, there is direct evidence of their use in France about the seventh century, and of rules for the guidance and regulation of mixed choirs. We get at the secret of the restrictive policy in the formation of Church choirs later on. An edict of one of the Popes forbidding the use of female voices in the singing of the Canon of the Mass, or that solemn portion of the office which begins after the recitation of the Nicene Creed, with the "Preface" before the "Sanctus," and includes the consecration of the bread and wine, was the primary stumbling-block and the *prima facie* starting point of the modern—for it is only modern, viewing the question through the long consecutive ages of the Jewish and Christian Churches—restricted choir of men and boys. The chancel choir not unnaturally became the type of the English cathedrals at the Reformation, and with some development became the only cathedral choir. On the Continent the two types of chancel choir (of priests, men, and boys leading the purely ecclesiastical plain-song) and the more fully equipped musical choir at the west end of the Church, of mixed voices supported by organ and orchestra, still remain distinct institutions, and have their established uses, even through in the Pope's Chapel, and in more severe ecclesiastical and in all monastic establishments the plain-song chancel choir, singing unison for the most part, reigns supreme. An inspection of the best schools of Church and sacred music will show the folly of our modern neglect of the employment of female voices in the Church. Take, for instance, Bach's "Passions Musik," no proper justice can be done to such delicate, refined, and expressive idioms by choirs lacking the presence of female voices. It is indeed asserted that certain contralto solos have been sung by distinguished lady artists not only at St. Anne's, Soho, but also at St. Paul's Cathedral, when this music was sung, and both these Churches boast of highly-trained choirs of men and boys. References need scarcely be made to the necessity there is for the presence of female voices in the just rendering of the works of the modern Roman Church composers. It is no argument to point out that a large amount of Church music has been produced both in the Roman and Anglican communities which may be fairly rendered by male choirs, such music being written under pressure of surrounding restrictions in this direction; but it would be difficult to show that even this branch of Church music would not greatly gain by being rendered by more complete choirs embracing all the vocal types.

(To be continued.)

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